

"State of the Society" Report

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The author was president of the Society for Range Management in 1991. This address was given at the Society's Annual Meeting in Spokane, Washington, in February 1992.



For those SRM members who attended our annual meeting in Spokane in February, thanks for coming! For those who didn't, you missed an outstanding meeting. The Pacific Northwest Section Annual Meeting Planning Committee, headed by Grant Harris and Chad Bacon, did a great job and worked hard to make the Spokane meeting one of the best ever. Many thanks to all involved!

Aside from a handful of people in our headquarters staff, all of our SRM workers are VOLUNTEERS, who give generously of their time and effort to make the business of the Society go smoothly and effectively at both the Section and Society levels. Our committee chairs and members perform a valuable service in specialized areas that could not be handled any other way. Sections run the same way, with members willing to work hard to bring the Society's work to the ground level, "where the action is". And speaking of Sections, I had the opportunity to attend meetings of about half of them this past year, and I was most impressed by the quality of the meetings and programs and also by the attention that our Sections are giving to *student* activities. Many have auctions and other fund raising activities to provide money for student scholarships and travel to SRM meetings. These students are bright and ambitious; they represent the future of the Society and of the profession.

SRM Sections are the strength of the Society! They're where we make our most valuable contacts and influence on-the-ground range management. Sections build the leaders that SRM needs. The Advisory Council, made up of the Section officers, is playing a stronger role in SRM, providing advice and counsel to the Board of Directors on a variety of subjects and issues. The elected Advisory Council Chair is a member of the Executive Committee of the Board, handling routine business and addressing issues that the Board doesn't have time for at the annual or summer meeting. It assures that the "Section perspective" is included in those deliberations.

Let's talk about finances, a subject that we sometimes try to avoid. Well, we're in pretty good shape thanks to a lot of folks including our Finance Committee and members and to our frugal Executive Vice-President, Pete Jackson. We see no need to consider a dues increase (with attendant membership loss) despite rising costs of operation. We'll keep looking for innovative ways to add to our income. The Major Enhancement task groups have been seeking *grants* and opportunities to *contract* services such as we did in Coordinated Resource Management training. It is also working on *partnerships* for our *Rangelands* color inserts and reprints that would help finance this effort and meet mutual needs and on new *publications* such as a cowboy songbook as a followup to our popular cowboy cookbook. In addition, I have asked Section presidents to consider opportunities to host conferences or symposia on timely and topical subjects that would help further SRM's objectives, increase our visibility, attract new members, and

make some money for both the Sections and the Society in a partnership effort. Our *Endowment Fund* has reached the \$100 thousand mark, thanks to efforts by John Hunter and a lot of folks. This means we can begin spending a portion of the interest on priority projects or activities. Most recently Larry and Susan Riordan and Wes and Margaret Hyatt joined the prestigious Trail Boss Club by making major contributions to the fund.

Our Denver office staff deserve special recognition and thanks for the hard work to do. This includes our capable and hard-working Washington, D.C., liaison, Ray Housley, whose Capitol Corral in *Rangelands* keeps us well posted on important issues and events. Recognition is also due our publications folks and editor Gary Frasier of *JRM* and *Rangelands* and editor Jerry Schwen of *Trail Boss News*, which now carries all (practically all) of the Society's business. We should all be proud of our three publications; they are the best of their kind in the business. *JRM* is recognized around the world as a premier scientific natural resource publication and *Rangelands* is gaining similar recognition for its practical, usable content and attractive format. Incidentally, our headquarters office in Denver is a place all of our members should visit when they get the chance. It is a fine old, but well-built and cared for building with ample space for our needs and some rental income as well and with a nice conference room. We still have our old building with a first priority of selling it and a second of keeping it rented and bringing in income.

One of my highest priorities in this term of office has been to figure out how SRM can reach more people with our good message of range management and wise resource use. Of course we need to keep working to increase *membership*. Kent Taylor and his committee have done a good job this year, but it's the responsibility of all of us to recruit new members. We're doing someone a favor when we ask them to join SRM; the benefits far outweigh the costs for anyone interested in managing rangeland or improving their professional capabilities. We should all carry a membership application blank and not hesitate to promote SRM membership! I proposed an affiliate membership at a reduced cost for those whose primary interest is in another related organization. While this was not approved, we are considering an arrangement where such folks might subscribe to *Rangelands* and Section newsletters and be invited to attend Section meetings and field trips. This would be a Section option and achieve essentially the same purpose.

The controversy continues to grow about *rangeland uses*. We have made it clear that range or rangeland is a *kind of land*, not a use of land. We also recognize that grazing has been a traditional and appropriate use of rangeland when proper use and management are applied. Critics represent grazing as universally destructive, pointing to cases of poorly managed range to prove their point. The general public is confused and easily influenced by such media campaigns as the recent Audubon/TBS video, "The New

Range Wars", that depicted grazing as detrimental and environmentally damaging. A report has been submitted to the United Nations Environmental Program claiming that desertification in the western U.S. and worldwide is the result of overgrazing. We have challenged its validity and scientific basis but critics still use such material as ammunition in the battle to remove grazing from public lands and eventually restrict such use on private lands as well. The livestock industry has made great strides in recent years in recognizing the importance of the care and management of their basic rangeland resource. They no longer defend their members who refuse to manage or adhere to terms of grazing permits. SRM is working with the National Cattlemen's Association, the American Sheep Industry Association, the American Farm Bureau Federation, and the National Association of Conservation Districts to help the public understand that wise use of natural resources is the true definition of *conservation* and we know how to manage rangelands in an environmentally sensitive way and still achieve productive outputs. Such coalitions are appropriate and effective as long as SRM is endorsing proper use and management of natural resources including rangelands and not simply supporting grazing. Coordinated Resource Management is one process to assure that all resources and uses are properly considered; SRM continues to be a leading proponent of CRM.

Despite good work by outstanding scientists over the past half century, we still don't have all the answers in range management. SRM has endorsed and supported funding for a continuing rangeland research program. Again, a problem is misunderstanding; it is much more than grazing research, it's the whole spectrum of range research that we support.

Range Management on an international level is a growing priority for SRM. Our International Affairs Committee is actively in contact with rangeland and grassland societies in different countries around the world on a regional basis and they publish an international rangeland newsletter to help share information and ideas. It was a pleasure for me to represent SRM at the IV International Rangeland Congress in Montpellier, France, last April where I was a plenary session speaker on the subject, "Multiple Use of Rangelands". SRM was selected to host the V IRC in 1995. A task group headed by Director Phil Sims has done some preliminary planning and selected Salt Lake City as the site and July 22-29 as the timeframe. There is much to do to get ready; we will need a brochure with a tentative program and agenda ready to take to the International Grassland Congress in New Zealand/Australia in February, 1993, to "advertise". We know that opportunities are ours to provide range management technology to many Third World countries and to eastern European countries, including former Soviet republics who have recently become free to pursue such things.

A major accomplishment for SRM in 1991 was publication of the Unity task group's report that, among other things, will adjust the way we describe range condition and encourage agencies to do it uniformly. The Board of Directors approved the report at the summer meeting in North Platte (which incidentally was a great meeting!) and we will work with range managing agencies to get it

implemented. Thanks to Lamar Smith and his task group for their good work.

SRM awards provide important recognition for our members who do outstanding work and contribute to research or management accomplishments in range management. Sections all have such awards programs and appropriately at the Society level we have a number of prestigious awards to present each year. Congratulations to all the 1991 winners, including our students, who as individuals and teams participate in contests in plant identification, range management exams, and public speaking. The Awards Committee is typical of SRM's hard working committees and task groups who attend to such business.

SRM 1992 President Jack Artz has been heading up an effort to develop a "Strategic Plan" for the Society. Input has come from member surveys such as we had in Reno, Washington, D.C., and Spokane. Jack will be telling you more about this in the months ahead.

Professionalism is the hallmark of SRM. Our Accreditation Committee assures that colleges with range management curricula are meeting professional standards. Our Range Consultant Certification Panel does the same thing for those who make a living or provide range management consultation on a part-time basis. The Employment Affairs Committee worked hard this past year to help the U.S. Office of Personnel Management update their Range Conservationist standards. And the Professional Affairs Committee gives constant attention to standards. The Excellence in Range Management Committee continued to provide annual meeting seminars, "Celebrating Range Management Successes".

After nine years serving as our Executive Vice-President, Pete Jackson announced his intention to retire in 1992. Pete has served the Society well, representing us at home and abroad. He has given special attention to our tenuous financial condition and assured that SRM does not overspend. Pete is well known and well liked throughout the Society and he will be genuinely missed. We thank him and wish him well. A task group headed by Past President Rex Cleary developed an updated position description for EVP, we advertised in the August *Trail Boss News*, the Executive Committee acting as search and screening task group evaluated applications received from seven well-qualified candidates, and recommended to the Board that Dr. Charles B. (Bud) Rumburg be hired. The Board approved that recommendation unanimously, including a provision that Ray Housley "act" as EVP during the three-month interim from May 1, when Pete leaves, to August 1, when Bud reports. Bud Rumburg will do a fine job as our EVP; you'll like him, I'm sure!

Our annual meeting theme at Spokane was, "Range Management, a Public Benefit." SRM members provide a real public service when we spread the range management message and help implement improved management of rangelands throughout the world.

I have enjoyed serving as your President during 1991. The year went by fast but it was rewarding and interesting. I thank our membership for giving me the opportunity.